



PROVOCATIONS OPEN ACCESS

Another Four Women: AfroCubana Entrepreneurs as Womanist Praxis

L. Kaifa Roland

Interdisciplinary Studies, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina, USA

Correspondence: L. Kaifa Roland (lroland@clemson.edu)

Received: 3 July 2024 | Accepted: 11 December 2025

ABSTRACT

This article is focused on four Black women entrepreneurs in Cuba's lucrative bed and breakfast home-based tourism economy, asking: (1) what intersectional factors facilitated their entrepreneurial enterprises, (2) how they conceptualize success, and (3) how their narratives illuminate patterns involving gendered race in the country's increasingly market-oriented context, and what opportunities might be on the horizon? Their narratives provide a praxis that demonstrates how despite their distinct paths to *cuentapropismo* (self-employment), socialist values largely shape their conceptions of success. Nonetheless, historic tropes from the prerevolutionary era involving White (or foreign) patriarchal gatekeepers reveal themselves, even with evidence of potential patrons who were previously inaccessible due to similar social marginalization. By centering these Black women's voices and experiences, this project uses womanism as theory in action.

Resumen

Este artículo se centra en cuatro emprendedoras negras de la lucrativa economía cubana de turismo basado en casa particulares, y se pregunta: (1) qué factores interseccionales facilitaron sus emprendimientos, (2) cómo conceptualizan el éxito, y (3) cómo sus narrativas arrojan luz sobre patrones que involucran la raza y el género en el contexto cada vez más orientado al mercado del país, y qué oportunidades podrían surgir en el futuro. Sus relatos ofrecen una praxis que demuestra cómo, a pesar de sus diferentes caminos hacia el trabajo por *cuentapropismo*, los valores socialistas influyen en gran medida en sus concepciones del éxito. No obstante, se revelan los tropos históricos de la era pre-revolucionaria que involucran a guardianes patriarcales blancos (o extranjeros), incluso con evidencia de clientes potenciales que antes eran inaccesibles debido a una marginación social similar. Al centrar las voces y experiencias de estas mujeres negras, este proyecto utiliza el womanismo como teoría en la práctica.

In the late 1960s, the late activist-singer Nina Simone popularized a haunting ballad called *Four Women* that introduced listeners to four Black women: the dark-complexioned Aunt Sara was treated like a beast of burden; the biracial “yellow” Saffronia describes herself as the product of rape and now lives between two worlds; “Sweet Thing” describes herself as a tanned-skinned sex worker; while Peaches was born of enslaved parents and explains her bitterness grounded in a “rough” life. As an ethnographer, I am attracted to how much can be glimpsed of the women's praxis in each short “thickly descriptive” verse (Geertz 1973). Likewise, more than four decades ago, when Cuba's socialist revolution

was just getting underway, Oscar Lewis, Ruth Lewis, and Susan Rigdon also wrote an ethnography titled *Four Women* (Lewis et al. 1977) whose goal was to show how the revolution had affected the praxis—or everyday lives—of Cuban women.

In this article, I propose to introduce Another Four Women (a.k.a. “Four Women: the Remix”), this time, women of African descent who are entrepreneurs in Cuba's continuing (if market-based) socialist system, analyzing how race and gender—Blackness and womanhood, to be specific—structure opportunities and life chances in post-Fidel Cuba. This project is focused on four Black

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDeriv](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2025 The Author(s). *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC on behalf of American Anthropological Association.

women entrepreneurs in Cuba's lucrative bed and breakfast home-based tourism economy, asking: (1) what intersectional factors facilitated their entrepreneurial enterprises, (2) how they conceptualize success, and, (3) how their narratives illuminate patterns involving gendered race in the country's increasingly market-oriented context, and what opportunities might be on the horizon? Their narratives provide a praxis that demonstrates how despite their distinct paths to *cuentalpropismo* (self-employment), socialist values largely shape their conceptions of success. I also found that historic tropes from the prerevolutionary era involving White (or foreign) patriarchal gatekeepers reveal themselves, even with evidence of potential patrons who were previously inaccessible due to similar social marginalization. By centering these Black women's voices and experiences, this project uses womanism as theory in action; that is, I analyze what I learned from these Four Women entrepreneurs in terms of womanist praxis.

1 | Womanism and Praxis Among Middle-Class Caribbean Entrepreneurs

Alice Walker defined the concept of womanism as a Black woman centering theory and practice (i.e., praxis):

1. From womanish. (Opp. of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A Black feminist or feminist of color. From the Black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one ... Being grown-up ... Responsible. In charge. Serious.
2. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength ... Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female...
3. Loves music. Loves dance ... Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless.
4. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender. (1983: pp. xi-xii)

I provide Walker's expanded definition and etymology to demonstrate how I conceive womanism as both a theoretical framework and as methodological "way of doing." I employ womanism as *praxis*, in line with Chasity Bailey-Fakhoury's usage of the term: "the symbiotic relationship between theory and action" (2017, 157). Donald Nonini (2016) traces the concept of praxis to its origins in Marxist and Gramscian thought, establishing that "praxis [is] theoretically informed action aimed at the liberation of working people" (242). Though excluded from his literature review, womanist scholars are engaged in praxis based on their intersectional attention to (at the least) race, gender, and class (see Crenshaw 1991). This paper responds to Nonini's query: "As to anthropology, then, the praxis in question would be: What theoretically informed, self-reflexive actions do anthropologists engage in when they seek the liberation of working people?"

Indeed, Menah Pratt more explicitly centers womanism in what she terms "theomethaxis—the integration of theory, method, and praxis" which she coined "to reflect the complexity of the tool needed to do battle with the hegemony in the academy that constantly requires bifurcation, categorization, and binarism. Rather than conceptualizing theory and method as separate and binary and seeing praxis as distinct from theory and method, theomethaxis recognizes the power of integration to provide a holistic approach that defies categorization" (28).

The current project builds on womanist theorists of color that includes The Combahee River Collective (CRC/1977), Zora Neale Hurston (1937/1995), and bell hooks (1981). I take seriously CRC's charge that "If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression" (CRC 276). As a socialist Black feminist organization, CRC articulated decades ago the need to flatten power dynamics across multiple sites of oppression. When combined with Hurston's frequent imagery of Black women as the "mules of de world," the conclusion is that Black women occupy the intersection of both patriarchal and racial oppression. All of these positions align with bell hooks' critique of the "White supremacist, capitalist patriarchy" (1981, 51).¹

In Cuba, the intersection of Blackness and womanhood is generally erased except in the context of sexuality. In literature and the arts, Black women in Cuba (as elsewhere) are often a background presence who clean, serve, or sing (Hicks 2019)²; they generally only constitute the foreground when analyzed as sexual beings in the creation of the biracial *mulato/a* category (Fraunhar 2018) or as sex workers in the post-Soviet era (Cabezas 2018). This project builds on prior analyses that focus on Black Cuban women, while expanding the literature in a way that centers their experiences as members of an emerging Black middle class.

Raising the Race: Black Career Women Redefine Marriage, Motherhood, and Community has a similar project of expanding narratives about Black middle-class women in the southeastern United States (Barnes 2016). Barnes' study is based in Atlanta and focuses on what she calls "strategic mothering" as a "framework ... to account for the myriad ways in which Black mothers continuously navigate and redefine their relationship with work to best fit the needs of their families and their communities" (2016, 2). The women in her study come from various class backgrounds, have completed higher education, and have left the full-time workforce to raise their children, relying instead on their husband's income as the source of their middle-class status. Black Cuban women might also employ strategic mothering though there are several key differences. Certainly, race and class are conceived distinctly, but also whether they opted to leave the workforce or not, the AfroCubanas I spoke to chose self-employment largely as a strategy to navigate post-Soviet life with the continuing U.S. embargo. Moreover, while all of the women in the current study were mothers, only half were married.

The choice of entrepreneurship as the preferred strategy for the Four Women in the current study is shaped not only by Cuban realities, but also the broader Caribbean context. Carla Freeman (2014) attends to middle-class entrepreneurs in Barbados in

Entrepreneurial Selves: Neoliberal Respectability and the Making of a Caribbean Middle Class. She is interested in entrepreneurialism as a form of flexible self-making born in neoliberalism. “Importantly, the means by which selfhood is contemplated, crafted, and judged, are not solely private or personal matters, in the narrow sense that they are simply up to the individual or made possible by sheer grit or ‘choice.’ Rather, new concepts of the self are vital to the broader workings and power of the political economic and social order” (2). Though there are clear tensions between neoliberalism and notions of flexibility in the Cuban context, it will become evident that my womanist concern for how The Four Women discuss their visions for their businesses aligns with this broadly conceived understanding of self-making.

2 | Incipient Market-Socialism and the Color (and Gender) of Money

Black-owned *cuentapropistas* (self-employed people) were rare during my previous long-term project in Cuba on tourism and racialized belonging (1999–2006) due to a confluence of circumstances. Cuba’s socialist society is designed to be egalitarian, with the state as the sole owner of property and aspirations for no extreme wealth or extreme poverty. Despite increased social mobility for non-Whites under the revolution, proximity to masculine whiteness remained a status indicator (Morrison 2015). Moreover, when the Soviet Union fell and the “Special Period” economy backed by tourism and U.S. dollars became the norm in Cuba, those with family abroad had resources to invest in home-based tourism businesses like room rentals and restaurants.³ And, indeed Cuba has survived that difficult moment of widespread hunger and hardship and entered the post-Castro era under the guise of market-socialism.⁴

During that earlier research, I once rented an entire one-bedroom house for seven months for CUC\$200/month while the *mestizo* owner went to live in his father’s country home for the duration. “Manuel” described his deceased mother as *mulata* (i.e., biracial of African and European descent) and his father as White.⁵ Here, the legacy of male whiteness acted as property that could extend wealth to one’s descendants due to the ability to earn money from a foreigner because there was additional real estate the family could occupy.

That house in the Havana suburbs of Playa was my home base that year, but I also traveled to more remote areas. In that period before many *casas* had access to an international market via the Internet, I located *casas* for those excursions through a printed list I was given by an agent who worked at the Vedado bus station in Havana. All the *casas* were owned and operated by White women living in their (or their husband’s) family’s inherited home, suggesting a network that perpetuated the value of whiteness and/as property.

While housing geography may have been inherited or incidental to one’s social circumstances before the revolution, its import became increasingly salient amidst the precarity of the post-Soviet Special Period (Benatti 2023). Skin color, too, is supposed to be incidental in a socialist revolution whose goal was egalitarianism; but the realities of market-socialism revealed the legacies of race.

Among Raúl Castro’s most notable policy decisions was to expand the categories of entrepreneurship while trimming the inflated numbers of people employed by the state. Given the revolution’s socialist policy of full-employment, and longstanding discomfort with the differentiation of wealth portended by entrepreneurship under his brother Fidel’s decades in power, this indicated a major turning point (Bastian 2018). Katherine Gordy (2015) details how women were particularly affected by this societal shift: “During the initial cutbacks of the early 1990s ... women were fired first from state jobs and their work opportunities curtailed. This decision was not made on the basis of gender-neutral criteria, but rather under the assumption that women would find other work more easily in the nonstate sector and that women staying at home was more acceptable than men staying at home” (175). And, indeed, many women—though far fewer Black women—found their way to the fledgling self-employment arena.

By December 2015, Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro announced renewed relations between the neighboring countries whose distance had been exaggerated by their oppositional Cold War stances. By the following summer, there was an explosion of tourism-related businesses with Cubans hoping to cash in on the anticipated flood of American travelers. Cubans of African descent also began to enter the tourism game.

3 | Womanist Praxis as Methodology

During the summer of 2015, I began the research that underlies this paper by pouring through AirBnB profiles for room rentals in Havana. With tourism having opened up to U.S. travelers more easily not long before, the ability to book a *casa* online in advance was new to me. Rather than draw from the stack of business cards for *casas particulares* in my repository, this time I wanted to rent from a proprietor of African descent. Given the housing demographics—not to mention the racial complexity—in Cuba, this involved quite a bit of scrolling and quite a bit of squinting. Eventually I clicked my cursor on “Linda”—a smiling brown-skinned woman, with a close-up of her and her lighter brown husband (Figure 1: Casa Linda). After making contact and booking time at her *casa*, Linda readily shared her story, which led to subsequent interviews with Linda, “Lourdes,” “Eva,” and “Beti” focused on their paths to becoming owner-operators of *casas particulares*. The use of quotation marks at first mention indicates a pseudonym, used to protect the identities of nonpublic individuals.

Having met Linda and Eva in the preliminary research phase (2015 and 2017, respectively), I have stayed multiple times with them and remain in regular contact via social media and WhatsApp. During Winter 2018–2019, I conducted funded research that provided the opportunity to stay with each of the Four Women. Since I only stayed with Beti and Lourdes once each during this winter visit, I have much less content for the two of them; still, their interviews illuminate the significance of White men—or men who live abroad—on their paths to entrepreneurship.

It will become evident that my primary methodologies involved participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and what I am calling “longitudinal depth” based on the multiyear relationships with two of the women that allowed me to tease out nuances

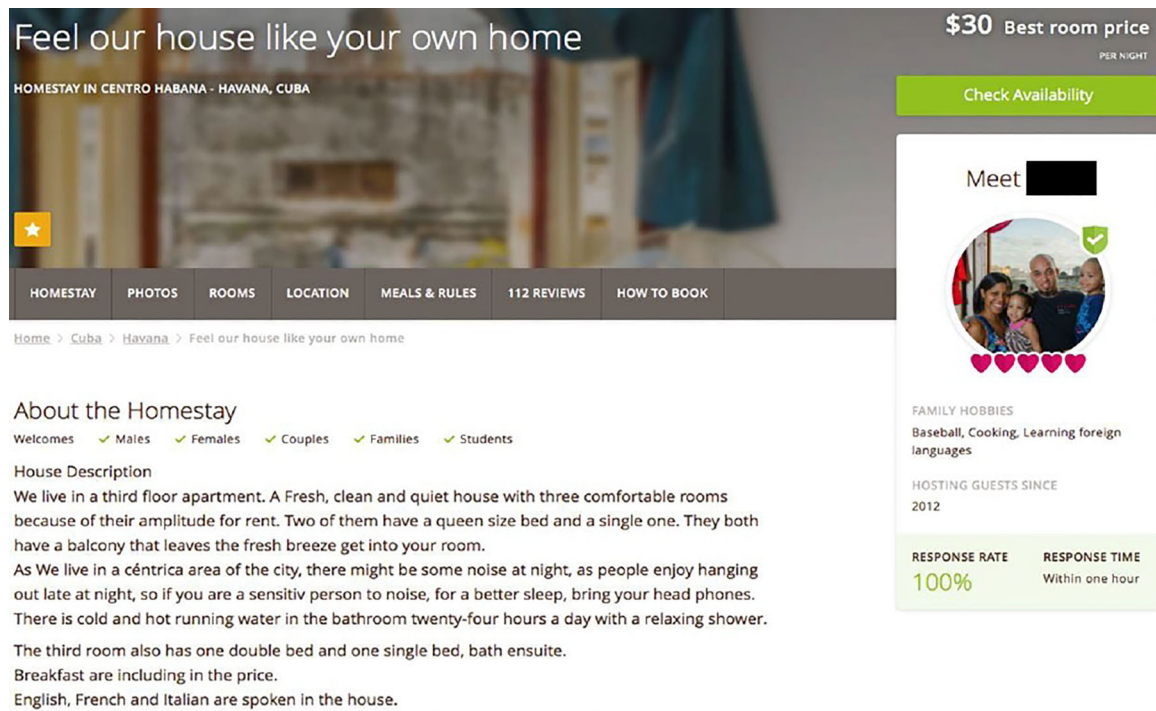


FIGURE 1 | Casa Linda. Screenshot from Homestay.com.

in their narratives in Cuba's ever-evolving context. Writing in clear language that makes the ethnographic process accessible and transparent to nonspecialists is also key to my methodology. My methodology also involves reflexivity (Pratt 2023; Roland 2011; see also Davies 1999), so I should be clear up front that I am aware of my own ethnographic limitations: because I study touristic spaces, my positionality as a participant-observer is largely from the touristic standpoint, even as I observe and participate as a Black woman anthropologist who has studied raciality in Cuban tourism for more than 20 years⁶; as one who values my relationships with people, I do not press invasive questions about race or background beyond an interviewee's initial response; and following Bianca C. Williams' conception of interviewees and interlocutors as "everyday experts" (2018), I foreground their voices, valuing their analyses of their world over my own or theorists of other contexts. Specifically, given the general silence on the lives of middle-class Black Cuban women, I present their narratives using their own words as drawn from my field notes as much as possible in order to center the experiences of these Black women (see McClaurin 2001). This approach represents my invocation of womanism as praxis.

3.1 | Meeting Linda (Spring 2015)

"When I was born [in 1979], my parents lived in my grandmother's house. There were 13 people living there. You understand that in Cuba we have several generations living together due to the problem of space. Then my father, who taught English at an *aduanas* [customs] school, was rewarded for being a good worker and given a house in La Lisa [on the outskirts of Havana City]. I lived there with my mother, father, and sister in a two-bedroom house ... When I met my husband, he lived with us and slept on a blow-up mattress on the floor of the living room.

"Anyway, when I was big and pregnant with my son [her oldest of 2 children; age 3 at the time of interview], I had been working as an assistant and receptionist for a *casa particular* in Old Havana because of my foreign language skills ... One night I was hosting a dinner for the family of a [White] Canadian man. He really appreciated the way I took care of them and after several visits, he asked 'what would you do if I gave you X amount of money?' It was a large sum of money, and I told him I had never thought about it. He asked if I would consider buying a house and renting out rooms. You know foreigners can't buy property ... He told me to look for places that were for sale that I liked, and I found this one. He sent me \$28,000 to buy the house. He taught me a lot of business stuff because he is a big businessman and I have been running the house ever since. Almost all of the money we earn, 95%, goes to paying back the debt. I make sure my children have clothes and food—sometimes my husband and I go without, or just have rice and beans, but the children are always taken care of."

I asked if she was happy with the arrangement with the Canadian investor and she said she was. She said she would be free and clear of the debt within two years—and, indeed, she finished paying off the debt in winter 2017. While he paid for the furniture, she made little upgrades to the house—the air conditioner in the room I was renting, the refrigerator for the house—through tips and help from her parents. She also told me of other upgrades she would like to make, including air conditioning in the other two rooms and a television for the common space. She said they would make them little by little. She appreciated her husband's constant support in achieving her vision. During that first visit, I asked why the house was called "Casa 'Sandy'" and not named for her; she explained that the house is named for her son, not her husband with a similar sounding name.

3.2 | Revisiting Linda (Summer 2018)

By the time I stayed with Linda again, Raúl Castro had stepped away from the presidency and Miguel Díaz Canel had ushered in the new post-Castro era. In one of our conversations, I observed that things seemed to be changing, and she agreed:

“Some things are changing here for the better and some for the worse. We have this new president, and no one knows what’s going to happen. Everyone is waiting for things to change, but we’re just waiting. The president is going around the country listening to people so he can come up with a plan, but we’re just waiting. In the meantime, they aren’t issuing any new *cuentapropista* licenses.” I asked why, since entrepreneurship seemed to be one of Raúl’s priorities as he trimmed the state employment rolls. “The problem is entrepreneurship is kind of capitalist, and we’re not supposed to do that here, so they are studying it and trying to figure out what to do next. The thing is, we have three problems here:

1. *The government doesn’t know how much money we’re really making so they keep changing the rules.* For example, I have to pay \$40/month for each rentable room—whether there are guests or not—in addition to 10% of each occupation. But how do they know how much the guests actually pay? What if I charge guests \$40/night for the room but report to the government that I only charge \$30/night? How do they know? So, what they do is estimate how much a room in a certain area likely charges per night, and that’s the monthly tax. But they [the government] don’t trust us so they keep changing the tax rates in different places to try to capture money they imagine they’re losing. Now, as for me I can always handle it because I have enough guests. I can easily make my quota because I’m always booked, but the proprietor downstairs never gets her quota. We’re in the same neighborhood, in the vicinity of the same attractions so our tax rate is the same, but I attract more people. It’s easy for me to pay that tax, but she’s struggling to make it. Also, everyone knows there’s a low season and a high tourism season. How are people supposed to make their taxes during times when there are few guests? Why not lower them during those times? So that’s the first problem.
2. *Should money be most important, or should people be most important?* Now there are some people who have enough money not only to rent rooms but want to rent out all the rooms in a building. They want to know, if they have the money, why can’t they do that? Or in a more practical example: my husband goes out regularly and buys a huge pallet of water to take care of our guests’ needs. We have the money, so we buy it. But what about my mother who’s just a regular English teacher? She’s out with her granddaughter and wants to buy her some water. She goes to the store but there is none because my husband bought it all for the tourists. Should everything be for the tourists, or should regular people be considered? So now my husband goes to the store and can only buy 12 bottles at a time, but that’s not enough for my guests’ needs. He’s got the money, but he can’t spend it the way he needs to. This is another Cuban dilemma: *there needs to be a place proprietors can go to get the things we need to run our businesses without interrupting the needs*

of the rest of the population. When I told her about Costco or Sam’s Club—where members pay a club fee, then receive lower prices on mass purchases—she said, “Yes, but right now it’s the opposite—high prices on whatever quantity you can get.”

3. *There are extreme differences between those who have [hard currency] and those who don’t.* The ideals of the revolution were to equalize society. Especially for Blacks and women. And it did that to a degree. But now those ideals are breaking down. There were always differences, but now it is ... magnified. Exaggerated. It is just out of whack.

I followed up by asking if the revolution was still intact or if it is over. She responded: “For the last 30 years, things have been changing. Old people believe in the old ways, they’re Fidelistas.⁷ But young people don’t want to live here anymore. Everyone wants to live abroad. ‘A university education? What’s the point?’ Young Blacks want to marry White foreigners to move away. Do you realize that we have a very old population? Young people are moving away. Women refuse to have babies here. They want to have their children somewhere else. It is all very sad to me.” To that, I asked her what she envisioned for her children’s future, and her answer continues to provide me a ray of hope: “They will own this property ... And any future properties I buy. They will benefit from what I am doing now. They will be educated and live good lives in Cuba. That is what I see.”

I then asked, “Now that you’ve finished paying the Canadian back [December 2017 made 5 years], what are your next plans?” She answered: “I think my new goal will be looking forward to the day when I can rent one room, keep one room for my husband and me (the children will still sleep in the back), and have the other room as the room for friends like you, where you can stay without charge.” She continued, but began speaking slowly and deliberately: “Do you realize that here a medical doctor earns roughly \$50 each month? I earn \$40 *per night. For each room.* That’s why I’m clear that I don’t need all of that. Now that I’m finished with the debt, I know I can do it. I know I don’t need all of that. I am happy with functionality.”

I told her that she sounds like she is in the same socialist-capitalist limbo she described the government being in: she lives by way of capitalism but has socialist ideals. She smiled at the irony.

3.3 | Meeting Eva (Summer 2017)

Since Linda’s *casa* was fully booked when I was prepared to make my second preliminary research trip, I located Eva by searching online sites as described above. While Eva and I had an excellent rapport from the beginning, she preferred I take written notes than record our interviews. What follows are field notes from my first time at her residence [Figure 2: Casa Eva]:

The spacious, fifth-floor apartment she rents is the house she grew up in. Her father-in-law—the older White man with a cosmopolitan sensibility that I had met when her husband checked me in earlier—has helped her outfit the residence for renters with features like air conditioners and mini-bar refrigerators in each

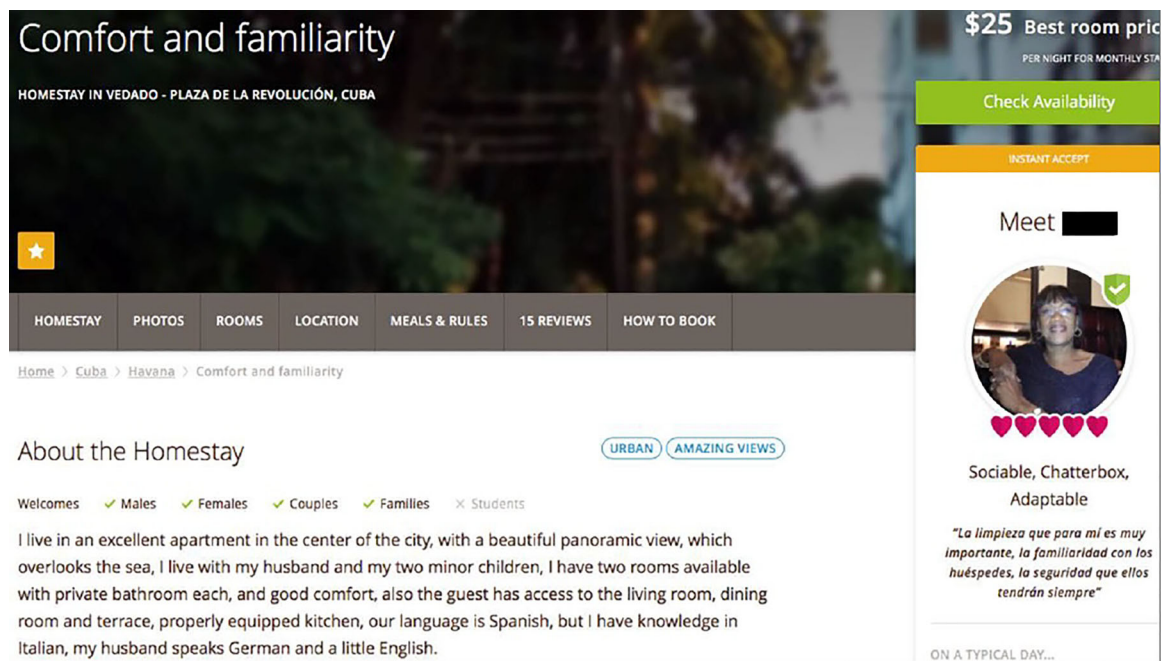


FIGURE 2 | Casa Eva. Screenshot from Homestay.com.

of the two guest rooms. In addition to running the *casa* and being a mother to two teenagers [ages 12 and 14 at the time] and a wife, she works as an administrative assistant at Prensa Latina, which is where she was when I arrived. We talked about race (in hushed, whispered tones) and access to rentable homes, the effects of Trump’s policies on Cubans and Cuban business (“*It is designed to hurt them [the government], but it ends up squeezing us [the people]!*”) . . . She is the only Black in the building. She rents her rooms through the AirBnB and Homestay apps.

I asked how many weeks she needed people to reside with her to cover her taxes. She never exactly answered but said there is a fixed state tax, and then the state gets 10% for every guest she hosts. So, clearly, it is extremely hard for *casas* to make a profit. She then whispered that though she reports to the state that she rents one room, she actually rents two. This was a scenario that other *casa* owners had confided to me in the past. She said she only wished there was a place where business owners could go to buy things in bulk for cheap, so they could turn a profit.

As my trip was ending, Eva shared a little more of her story: born in 1964 (five years into the socialist revolution), she is one of nine children, with four boys and four other girls (though one girl is deceased). Two of her brothers live in the U.S., including one in Austin, Texas. Her mother passed when she was three years old, so her father, a musician, raised all the children himself. He never married again. Her father and the oldest son slept in the room I was renting, the other boys stayed in the guest room next to me that was unoccupied at the time, and the girls stayed in what is now Eva and her husband’s room; the youngest child was a boy who would drag his pallet into the girls’ room because the older boys came in so late and he didn’t want to be alone.

During my stay, I only ever saw Eva’s sons toward the back of the kitchen, where like many middle-class Cuban homes built before the revolution in the first half of the twentieth century, there was what used to be a “servant’s room” that the boys occupied. I wondered how Eva, as the second youngest child, had ended up being the one to inherit the apartment, and when I visited her again the following summer, I learned the answer:

Yes... I am the youngest girl. My brother is the youngest child. I always had plans to leave the country, but first one brother got the lottery to leave the country,⁸ and later my younger brother left too. I was taking care of my father until he died, and my sisters had gotten married and moved to their own houses. So that’s how I came to be the one in the house. I came to rent rooms because my brother sent a friend from Italy to visit. He stayed two weeks. But back then it wasn’t legal. Two years later [when Raúl opened the country to more entrepreneurship], my husband and I got the idea to rent rooms.

3.4 | Revisiting Eva (Summer 2018)

While Linda had jumped into each of her interviews enthusiastically, Eva initially appeared far less impressed by my project. One day during my second visit to her home, she asked if I wanted to do the formal interview. From my seat on her balcony [Figure 3: Eva’s Balcony], I told her whenever she was ready.

She said “well you’re out there and I’m in here. Come in with me.” While I had stepped my foot or head in the kitchen to hand her things, I had never felt welcome in “the family’s space” (and I should add, this is the case at Linda’s and most other *casas* I’ve rented in Cuba where the family was resident). Eva’s husband



FIGURE 3 | Eva's Balcony. Screenshot from Homestay.com.

went to the living room to watch the news. She then offered me a shot of the rum she and her husband were both sipping and began putting rice in the rice cooker. However, even with the hope that alcohol might lubricate, her answers to my questions felt somewhat abbreviated:

- Q: What role does your husband play in helping you run the business?
- A: My husband helps prepare breakfast for guests. When things for the clients require leaving the house, like vegetables, fruit, [or] coffee, he takes care of those things . . .
- Q: How do you balance being a wife, mother, and worker?
- A: It is difficult to explain. It is hard to keep everything [on track]. I am the center of it all. It's hard. . . All of that and to always try to provide good service. . . [Here, I kept trying to prod for more detail, but she just kept repeating "it's hard."]
- Q: What's a normal day like in your life?
- A: There is no normal day [Q: so you wake at what time? She thinks, then repeats] There is no normal day.

The reason for her curt answers became apparent with her response to my last question:

- Q: Is there anything else you'd like me to know about owning a *casa* that I didn't ask you or that you expected me to ask?
- A: That I don't feel discriminated against at all.

I then asked if that was what she expected of the interview: that I would be asking questions about discrimination since my focus is on Black women? She crossed her arms, pursed her lips, and blinked slowly. As a Black American woman, I interpreted the familiar gesture to mean: "Hmph, I think you're full of it!" I rushed to clarify, "No, no, no! I just want to know your

experiences as a Black woman who owns a business where that is not commonplace. . ."

From there, I tried to keep her talking. I asked what role the government could play in supporting *casa* owners. She replied: "Help us to resolve things for our clients because we're trying to attract more tourists to the country. We're trying to do our best. Yes, [we could use] an *almacén* [warehouse] in the full sense of the word where all entrepreneurs, from *casas* to watch repairmen can find what they need."

Since she was by then answering more fully, my concluding question was: "How do you measure the success of your business?" She responded: "My rooms will be full, there will be good communication, [and] I will be providing great service. I will provide everything a guest needs as well as any hotel."

3.5 | Meeting Beti (December 2018)⁹

As my 2018 Winter Break approached, I located Beti's *casa* by searching AirBnB and homestay.com. She lived on Calle San Lazaro, which is a main thoroughfare in and out of Centro Habana a few blocks from the Malecón seawall. Upon meeting, Beti asked whether I had been to Cuba before and if I was with a church mission like other African Americans who had resided with her. I told her that I was a researcher and that I would love to hear her story since my newest project is "still on tourism in Cuba but focused on Black women who own *casas*." Though I was ill for the duration of my stay, and therefore have very few notes, Beti began telling me her story without further prompting:

I used to live on the far side of town. I was training to be a nurse when I had my son. He is 24. Then, my sister married a German. At that time, 23 years ago [1995], the country was opening up new laws on *cuentapropismo*. My brother-in-law thought we should get involved. So, when my parents died, we exchanged their house, my old house, and my sister's old house (since she had moved to Germany) for this big house.¹⁰ Then for the next six years we made improvements, little-by-little. Just a little at a time until finally it is how it is now.

3.6 | Meeting Lourdes (Christmas 2018)

Upon arrival at "Casa Lourdes" after an arduous overnight bus ride from Havana to Santiago on Christmas Eve, the mother of the proprietor offered my daughter and me breakfast, which we accepted. I took in the beautiful upstairs terrace level where the guest rooms are located [Figure 4: Casa Lourdes]. Another couple was also enjoying the terrace, including a Black English-speaking woman, whose European accent I could not place. When I first met Lourdes, we spoke for a while before she realized that I wasn't "the other one of you" (as she tried to hide her mistake). She worked for Cubatur and spoke excellent English.

Her picture on homestay.com had made her look unquestionably Black, but when I met her in her work clothes, she looked very light, like a golden-complexioned *mulata*. Her mother, who had cooked us breakfast that morning, had a very light

HOMESTAY PHOTOS ROOMS LOCATION MEALS & RULES 8 REVIEWS HOW TO BOOK FROM \$16 PER NIGHT

My house is located in the historic center of Santiago de Cuba, near the residencial Tivoli neighborhood, Plaza de Cespedes, Puerto International and other places of interés. Vivo with my mother and my daughters. I have two rooms with covered terrace and an open terrace on the top floor, the rooms have TV, refrigerator, hot and cold water, bathroom, wifi, parking. The house has three lounges and interior patio with garden. I am a tour guide from the travel agency Cubatur and speak several languages, English, French, Italian and Portuguese, I am laurada Russian language.

HOUSE FACILITIES

- ✓ Garden
- ✓ Bikes for use
- ✓ Computer
- ✓ Laundry
- ✓ Patio
- ✓ Parking
- ✓ TV
- ✓ Internet Access
- ✓ Air Conditioning

Sociable, Helpful, Responsible

"Soy guía de turismo y hablo varios idiomas, además de ser sociable, hablo diferentes temas como arte, música, cultura, cocina, general, situación actual, soy amigable y me gusta ayudar a mis huéspedes."

ON A TYPICAL DAY...
"I'm a clean person and keep a clean house."

WHEN I HOST GUESTS...
"I'm helpful and hands on. I can show them where to go and help them get there."

FAMILY HOBBIES
Gymnastics, Computer games, Cooking, Gardening, Reading

HOSTING GUESTS SINCE
2008

FIGURE 4 | Casa Lourdes. Screenshot from Homestay.com.

complexion combined with a coarse hair texture that would race her *jabao* in Cuba. But when I glimpsed Lourdes that evening hosting a small group of women in her living room singing solemn hymns for *Noche Buena* (Christmas Eve), she looked very dark again. I wondered whether she had been wearing light-colored makeup before. I noted that Lourdes had quite interesting hazel/blue/green eyes that likely affected her overall appearance. I began to hesitate to include her in the study, because I was unsure how she would identify racially, and I did not want to offend her by asking, the way she had irked me by calling me "one of you." Though Cuba is a distinct context, teaching about biraciality has ingrained in me that being asked "what are you?" or other invasive questions about one's multiracial parentage can be experienced as unwelcome microaggressions (see Root 2000). I ultimately decided to approach her by saying, "As I've stayed in *casas* over the years, I've noticed that most of the owners are White. I wonder if that is changing. *Claro que cuestiones raciales son diferente aquí en Cuba, especialmente en Santiago... si es posible puedo preguntar cómo te identificas racialmente?*" ["Certainly, racial matters are different here in Cuba, especially in Santiago... if it is possible, may I ask how you identify racially?"]. She sidestepped a direct answer, but after we continued talking about my research, and I clearly explained that it was about "AfroCubana *casa* owners," she agreed to participate—which I took to mean that she identified as a woman of African descent.

After breakfast on our last day in Santiago, I headed downstairs for our interview. Lourdes was sitting with her hair in curlers under an old-fashioned professional salon hair dryer. I did my interview with her there amid all the busyness of her house: her 80-year-old mother was behind us doing dishes, her two teenage daughters came and went from different rooms, and the young man who had been working on the house the day before sat there

watching us most of the time. So, it was not a terribly private interview. Moreover, because she was under the dryer, I was asking questions, and she was responding to them very loudly:

Lourdes had been working in tourism for 23 years. She had studied foreign languages and international relations in college and spoke Russian, French, German, and English. Because she worked in tourism, she was too afraid to put her name down as the owner of the *casa particular* due to the regulations on entrepreneurship and training by the socialist system, so on paper her mother is the official owner.¹¹ When I interviewed her in 2018, she had been running her *casa* for about 7 years; she had added on the upstairs units for rental at about the same time she started running the *casa*. She was born and grew up there, and it is also the house her mother grew up in, "though those were very different times," she said, without explaining further whether she was acknowledging the prerevolutionary era or Santiago's racial context in the 1940s—or perhaps both.

Lourdes is a devoutly Christian woman and told me that she did not accept guests with *jineteras* (sex workers). She said she realized that she wasn't making as much hard currency as those who opened their homes to anyone, even though other homes were dirtier and less nice than hers. She told me that tourism had been down and reiterated what other *casa* owners had told me: there were cycles of boom and bust. She said that there had been a moment of high tourist traffic, but then it had stopped. "There have never been a lot of Americans, but then Trump..." She interrupted herself, perhaps thinking a criticism would bother me as an American. She continued along another track: "And the Europeans are all traveling on packages now," meaning that they were coming on package tours and so did not stay in *casas particulares*.

TABLE 1 | Casa owners: At a glance.

	Beti	Eva	Linda	Lourdes
Location	Centro Havana (St. Lazaro)	Vedado, Havana (Ave. Presidentes)	Centro Havana (el Prado)	Santiago-de-Cuba
Home access	<i>Permuta</i> exchange	Home of birth (musician father assigned with Revolution)	Loan for purchase	Familial home (mother born in home before Revolution)
Spouse/children (racialization)	Unmarried two children (Black/father not mentioned)	Max (White) two children	Sammy (Black/Chinese biracial) two children	Unmarried two children (biracial/father not mentioned)
Global contacts	German brother-in-law	U.S. brothers (Black); Foreign press corps father-in-law (White)	Canadian investor (White)	Cubatur position
Profession (continuing?)	Nurse (previously)	Administrative Assistant at periodical	Customs/Hospitality (previously)	Tour guide
Conception of Success	(Did not ask)	Hotel quality service to guests	Repay debt Children inherit <i>casa</i> Room to house friends free	Holistic touristic offerings (high quality lodging, city and Cuba tours)

I asked about a normal day during high season and low season, and she said, “You see how it has been with you here—just directing and very, very busy and making sure everything is just right. Trying to figure out how and when to get groceries, because you know it isn’t like where you’re from where you can get everything you need at one place. We don’t have cars, and I have to go from place to place on *motos* or taxis, on this bum foot... But sometimes it is slow and there is nothing...”

Of all the questions I asked, the one that roused the most emotion was when I asked how she would know her business was successful. She smiled a big smile and spoke with a confident peacefulness: “My goal is to provide a holistic experience. I would like to house guests, take them on tours, show them my city... my country... When I can do that, I will know that I am successful.”

4 | Conclusion and Implications

In this concluding section, I revisit the key questions addressed by this project: (1) What intersectional factors facilitated these AfroCubanas’ entrepreneurial enterprises? (2) How has Cuba’s political-economic context shaped these women’s notions of success? And, (3) how do their narratives illuminate patterns involving gendered race in the country’s increasingly market-oriented context, and what opportunities might be on the horizon? Table 1 provides a summary of the casa owners’ interview responses.

4.1 | *Hombres por la Yuma: A New Spin on an Old Trend*

The first common thread that emerged became clear early in the research, which began with Linda’s narrative about how her business got its start: the Canadian businessman presented her

with the opportunity to buy a house using his money and her hospitality skills. She located the house and ran the business, while he provided the initial investment that she would pay back to him over time. Prior to that exchange, Linda lived too far away from the city center in a home that was overflowing with married adults with growing families. The investor who lived abroad was a White man.

Eva’s story differed in that she ran her business out of the home she had grown up in. Her widower father was a jazz musician who was granted the apartment by Cuba’s socialist government because of its nearness to the many jazz clubs in the Vedado neighborhood where he regularly performed. After her siblings had moved away or married off, as the youngest daughter Eva was left to care for her father until he passed away. When the country began to open to foreign tourists in the early 2000s, her brother—who lives in Texas—sent a guest to stay with her providing the seed for the idea to rent rooms to foreigners. Her father-in-law, who was a journalist who regularly traveled abroad, would bring back products from his travels to outfit the new business. Her father-in-law was a White Cuban man; her brother—a Black Cuban-American man—lived abroad.

Like Linda, Beti had initially lived in a part of Havana that was not readily accessible to foreign tourists. It was only when her sister married a man from Germany that Beti could move to her more centrally located home and outfit it for foreign guests. Again, the brother-in-law who provided the seed capital as well as the impetus for the business was a White man who lived abroad.

Lourdes, in Santiago-de-Cuba, was the only one whose story may not have followed the same pattern. Like Eva, she lived in the centrally located house in which she was raised. However, she had expanded and outfitted the home to foreign tourists’ standards with money she alone had earned working in the formal tourism

industry. As I attend to this outlier in the general pattern, I take a moment here to highlight Santiago's uniqueness in Cuba just as I earlier drew attention to Lourdes' distinct racial presentation.

Santiago-de-Cuba has long been considered by Cubans and scholars alike as Cuba's "Black zone" (see Garth 2020). With its geographic location to the far east end of the island nearest the Spanish colonizers, Santiago was Cuba's first capital. Its geographic location also meant it received significant numbers of refugees—White and of color, including many newly emancipated—fleeing the Haitian revolution. In addition to Haiti to the east, Jamaica is to Santiago's immediate south, such that domestic events in either country often resulted in migration flows of largely Black peoples to Santiago. While there has historically been widespread racial intermixture throughout Cuban society, the western end of the country that includes Havana is perceived to be more of a *mestizo* mix of White and Indigenous, whereas the eastern end is viewed to have a greater *mulato* mix of Black and White.

With this discussion of Santiago's purported "Blackness" in mind, I encountered Lourdes' picture in my homestay.com search and was certain this middle-brown complexioned woman would readily identify as of African descent. The first resident I encountered in her house, however, was Lourdes' very light-complexioned, hazel-eyed, coily-haired mother who would be raced *jabao* in the Cuban context; that most U.S. Americans would likely race her as White suggests close White ancestry. As noted when I introduced Lourdes, I chose not to probe about her parentage since she did not volunteer the information herself (and given the non-private context I noted about our conversation). Rather, I drew from historiography on Cuban interraciality (see Fernández 2010) to plausibly hypothesize that Lourdes' home was likely inherited from a White grandfather. If that were the case, the pattern of an intervening White or foreign man would stand in each case.

This finding resonates with historic narratives about social mobility for Black women. Dating from the late nineteenth century—when *Cecilia Valdés*, the classic novel by Cirilio Villaverde (1839), told the fictional story of a light-complexioned biracial woman who aspires to marry a highborn White man that she does not realize is her brother while rebuffing the advances of a working-class Black man—all manner of Cuban novels, films, telenovelas, and comedies have suggested that women of African descent aspire to secure a better future through their connection to elite White men. In addition to Verena Martínez-Alier's seminal articulation about this mode of social climbing in her oft-cited *Marriage, Class, and Color in Nineteenth Century Cuba* (1974), Vera Kutzinski's textual analysis of Cuba's "*mulata*" trope highlights the public scorn that women of African descent received due to this stereotype. More recently, María Cristina Hierrezuelo (2020) documents how women of color in colonial Santiago achieved property ownership by examining their wills: whether the women bought their own freedom or were manumitted by their former owners, that they had to navigate patriarchal and White supremacist structures was inevitable.

As one who long bristled at the proposition that Afro-Cuban women actively engaged relationships with White men to better their (or their children's) life chances, the pattern that quickly emerged from the research was not one I anticipated. Still, it is

notable that while historic narratives may have construed women of color to be manipulative status climbers, the social scenario that empowered whiteness and masculinity in proportion to the ways it marginalized and excluded Black and brown women was not eliminated by a socialist revolution. In the post-Soviet era of revitalized capitalism as in the colonial era of African enslavement, AfroCubanas actively mobilize their skills and their networks to participate more fully in a society that might prefer they remain invisible. They employ "flexible labor" (Freeman 2014) and "strategic mothering" (Barnes 2016) in ways that parallel Black women elsewhere in the Americas.

4.2 | Conceptualizing Success

Perhaps my favorite question to ask in the interview sequence was: "*How do you measure the success of your business?*" In each case, the women's faces illuminated, and their eyes danced at achieving the full promise of her enterprise—what Freeman would call actualizing the self. Having concluded my previous project ready to change research sites due to the enduring sense of depression and hopelessness across my many visits to Cuba (Roland 2011), I welcomed the opportunity to hear these women voice their wildest dreams. That each woman answered the question distinctly from the others had me sitting on the edge of my chair by the time I conducted the final interview.

Linda told me she would be successful (1) when she had finished paying the Canadian back, (2) when she could afford to offer one of her rooms for free to guests that she considered family, and (3) when she had multiple properties that her children would ultimately inherit.¹² Eva defined success as delivering hotel-quality service to her guests. As one who works in the formal tourism industry, Lourdes defined success in terms of the holism of the experience she hoped to provide tourists, including showing them her city and her country beyond the high-quality experience she strove to provide in her *casa*. Likely because Beti jumped into the interview before I was fully prepared (or because I had a severe head cold), I neglected to ask how she conceived of success. I do note, however, in revisiting her homestay page to conclude this project, that her son is now running her business,¹³ so perhaps she has achieved a success of her own definition in the interim.

I found it notable that profits and financial considerations did not appear central to how these women described success. Rather, what stood out in their answers was their service orientation (especially Eva and Lourdes) and what might be conceived as a desire to build (or build on) social relations. In a society where pure monetary pursuits have been considered taboo for so long, their social and service-oriented framing of success is likely a function of their socialist upbringing. As Katherine Gordy argues: "Tensions produced by global capitalism and by state socialism come to the fore empirically and at the level of public and private discourse" (2015, 4).

Nonetheless, it was clear that the U.S. blockade—that has been in place throughout each of their lives—and Cuba's hybridized market-socialist context influences their ability to claim that success. The conversations I had with Linda and Eva where they expressed frustration about accessing products they need for their business without impacting the broader socialist system

indicates that socialism's tight regulations as well as the effects of the blockade limited their ability to provide for their guests. Importantly, in early 2021 after this research was concluded, President Díaz Canel's administration instituted *Ordenamientos* (Orderings), which in addition to unifying the currencies, raised national sector salaries, and introduced warehouse purchasing for entrepreneurs (see Bastian and Berry 2022).

Cuba's continuing revolutionary socialist ideology and the resultant U.S. blockade have both shaped all aspects of Cuban life for more than six decades, but life in Cuba is not stagnant. Paralleling Barnes' "strategic mothering," the women in this study took advantage of and created opportunities that changed the trajectory of their lives, leading to expanded notions of success. Still, this project demonstrates how the nexus of race, gender, and place factor into those possibilities being made real.

4.3 | Race, Gender, and Market-Socialist Intersections

The fall of the Soviet Union—precipitating "the Special Period"—gave new life to many social inequities from Cuba's prerevolutionary period. Whiter-skinned Cubans with family who lived abroad had access to lifestyles that darker-skinned Cubans without those networks largely did not enjoy. In this way, race reemerged as a salient category for Cubans, if it had ever disappeared (see Benson 2016). While all Cubans were forced to engage in activities that were ideologically suspect during the height of the Special Period hardships, *luchadores* (those engaged in "the struggle") of African descent were interpreted as morally questionable hustlers—*jineteros*—who were ripping off the revolutionary government (Roland 2011; see also Gordy 2015). In the feminine, those *jineteras* were generally interpreted as sex workers because Cuban women of African descent were believed to have little more to offer *yumas* (or foreigners with hard currency) than their sexuality. However, in my previous research project, I met several Black Cuban women who had nothing to do with tourists and were just *luchando* (struggling) to get by like everyone else.

As noted above, after Fidel Castro stepped down from the presidency, his brother Raúl began to make many of the changes of the Special Period permanent features of Cuba's socioeconomic landscape. As is frequently the case in capitalist countries, women were often the first fired when the socialist ideal of full employment was sacrificed. White women used the structural advantage of the domestic spheres that they had to contribute to their households: geographic locations near high tourist traffic, family abroad who could send money to upgrade their homes to tourist standards (i.e., air conditioning and hot water showers), and the socially expected *ama de casa* gendered knowledge of homemaking skills.

Given their raced and gendered histories as domestic servants, cooks, and housekeepers, AfroCubanas may also have had the homemaking skills to participate in the new tourism economy, but most needed support to access those other material factors. Like their White counterparts, the Black women I interviewed took full advantage of the resources at their disposal to outfit their homes and find their way to more tourist friendly locations as needed. Aside from Eva, each of the women I interviewed

acknowledged that Black *yumas* seemed to prefer their Black owned establishment. It was unclear whether this tendency was based in an ideology of "buying Black" in order to reinvest in communities that are assumed to share similar values and experiences in the world, or whether there is concern that White *casa* owners may discriminate against them and treat them poorly. Either way, based on the finding about the involvement of *yuma* (foreign) men investing in these businesses, I found myself imagining how the Black community abroad might contribute to the expansion of Black women-owned businesses in Cuba. This is an area ripe for further study.

To summarize, the women's stories clarify that their raced and gendered experiences are not singular. Like Eva's initial reticence, readers may have expected a paper focused on AfroCubana entrepreneurs to be about hardship and discrimination in the vein of the *Four Women* about whom Nina Simone once sang. Instead, this paper constitutes something of a womanist "revolutionary remix" in its response to Nonini's query about how self-reflexive anthropologists support the liberation of working people: "Another Four Women" documents the hopes and aspirations, pathways and praxis of these Black women in an enterprise where few participate. That AfroCubana opportunities often filter through foreign and/or White male hands is reflective of the continuing power of whiteness, patriarchy, and hard currency in today's market-socialism.

Endnotes

- ¹The page citation is only one of multiple usages in *Ain't I a Woman* (1981). Hooks frequently used this verbiage—often preceded by "imperialist"—in her writings and speeches, and she extended the latter term to "heteropatriarchy" while in conversation with transactivist Laverne Cox (see <https://www.berea.edu/centers/the-bell-hooks-center/symposium>). Even prior to its explicit articulation, the cisgendered and heterosexist nature of patriarchy was latent, if silenced.
- ²I include Black women's participation in the African-based religion known as Santería (Murphy 2001) under the broad "sing" category because it is often described more as an art-form than as a religion in its own right.
- ³Post-1959 exile trends tend heavily toward whiteness (see Pérez-Stable 2007)
- ⁴Market-socialism involves the incorporation of capitalist market-based tools to sustain centralized socialism. See Bastian 2018 for more detail.
- ⁵All nonpublic subjects are identified using pseudonyms to protect their identities.
- ⁶I appreciate—and respectfully disagree with—one reviewer's suggestion that Stout 2015 may have relevance to my ethnographic experience.
- ⁷Supporters of Fidel Castro, but also literally, faithful to Fidel.
- ⁸The *bomba* is a lottery system established under Bill Clinton's presidential administration that allows up to 10,000 Cubans annually to legally migrate to the United States.
- ⁹While I have more extensive notes on my time at Beti's, I have focused my discussion to the key points addressed in this paper due to space limitations.
- ¹⁰What Beti described is a popularly practiced but illicit real estate exchange known as *permutarse* or "house swapping."

- ¹¹Space limitations prevent a detailed explanation of the regulations outlined in the 2011 *Lineamientos* that placed many constraints on how home-based businesses could operate, see Bastian 2018.
- ¹²In the time since the formal research was completed, Linda has both (1) paid back the Canadian investor (Winter 2017), (2) relocated her business to a larger *casa* (early 2022), and (3) achieved sufficient business that preferred guests are permitted to stay without charge.
- ¹³I, therefore, do not include Casa Beti's marketing image.

References

- Bailey-Fakhoury, C. 2017. "Learning Through Collective Testimony: African American Motherwork, Womanism, and Praxis." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement* 8, no. 1–2: 157–174.
- Barnes, R. J. D. 2016. *Raising the Race: Black Career Women Redefine Marriage, Motherhood, and Community*. Rutgers.
- Bastian, H. 2018. *Everyday Adjustments in Havana: Economic Reforms Mobility and Emerging Inequalities*. Lexington Books.
- Bastian, H., and M. J. Berry. 2022. "Moral Panics Viral Subjects: Black Women's Bodies on the Line During Cuba's 2020 Pandemic Lockdowns." *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 27, no. 1–2: 16–36.
- Benatti, F. 2023. "Evolution of Property in Cuba in a Comparative Perspective." *Pravovedenie* 284–304. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu25.2023.303>.
- Benson, D. S. 2016. *Antiracism in Cuba: The Unfinished Revolution*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Cabezas, A. L. 2018. "Discourses of Prostitution: The Case of Cuba." In *Global Sex Workers*, edited by Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema, 79–86. Routledge.
- Crenshaw, K. W. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6: 1241–1299.
- Davies, C. A. 1999. *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. 1st ed. Routledge.
- Fernández, N. 2010. *Revolutionizing Romance: Interracial Couples in Contemporary Cuba*. Rutgers University Press.
- Fraunhar, A. 2018. *Mulata Nation: Visualizing Race and Gender in Cuba*. University Press of Mississippi.
- Freeman, C. 2014. *Entrepreneurial Selves: Neoliberal Respectability and the Making of a Caribbean Middle Class*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Garth, H. 2020. *Food in Cuba: The Pursuit of a Decent Meal*. Stanford University Press.
- Geertz, C. ed. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.
- Gordy, K. 2015. *Living Ideology in Cuba: Socialism in Principle and Practice*. University of Michigan Press.
- Hicks, A. 2019. "Domestic Service in a New Cuba." *NACLA — Report on the Americas* 51, no. 3: 262–267.
- Hierrezuelo, M. C. 2020. "Women 'of Color' in Santiaguera Colonial Society." In *AfroCubanas: History, Thought, and Cultural Practices*, edited by Devyn Spence Benson, 39–56. Rowman and Littlefield.
- hooks, b. 1981. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. South End Press.
- Hurston, Z. N., and C. A. Wall. 1937/1995. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Cairns Collection of American Women Writers. Novels and Stories New York: Library of America.
- Kutzinski, V. M. 1993. *Sugar's Secrets: Race and the Erotics of Cuban Nationalism*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Lewis, O., R. Lewis, and S. Rigdon. 1977. *Four Women: Living the Revolution: An Oral History of Contemporary Cuba*. University of Illinois Press.
- Martínez-Alier, V. 1974. *Marriage Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society*. University of Michigan Press.
- McClaurin, I. 2001. *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory Politics Praxis and Poetics*. Rutgers University Press.
- Morrison, K. Y. 2015. *Cuba's Racial Crucible: The Sexual Economy of Social Identities, 1750–2000*. Indiana University Press.
- Murphy, J. M. 2001. "Yéyé Cachita: Ochún in a Cuban Mirror." In *Osun across the Waters: A Yoruba Goddess in Africa and the Americas*, edited by Joseph M. Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford, 87–100. University of Indiana Press.
- Nonini, D. 2016. "Praxis." *Dialectical Anthropology* 40, no. 3: 241–249.
- Pérez-Stable, M. 2007. *Looking Forward: Comparative Perspectives on Cuba's Transition*. University of Notre Dame Press.
- Pratt, M. 2023. "A Black Womanist Theomethaxis: Theory, Method, and Praxis for Revolutionary-Revelation Writing." *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 12, no. 3: 24–47.
- Roland, L. K. 2011. *Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha: An Ethnography of Racial Meanings*. Oxford University Press.
- Root, M. P. 2000. "A Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People." In *Race Critical Theories*, edited by Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg, 355–368. Blackwell Publishing.
- Stout, N. 2015. "When a Yuma Meets Mama: Commodified Kin and the Affective Economies of Queer Tourism in Cuba." *Anthropological Quarterly* 88, no. 3: Summer 2015, 665–691.
- The Combahee River Collective. 1977/2014. "A Black Feminist Statement." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3/4: 271–280.
- Villaverde, C. 1839. *Cecilia Valdes: Ó La Loma Del Angel*. Imprenta Literaria.
- Williams, B. C. 2018. *The Pursuit of Happiness: Black Women, Diasporic Dreams, and the Politics of Emotional Transnationalism*.